

CHAPTER TWO

I am not lying!" Zora shot at Stella Brazzle. Zora and me and our friend Teddy were facing Stella Brazzle and her gang—Hennie, Joanne, and Nella. They were jealous of the attention kids showered on me and Zora for having been right at the spot when Sonny met his fate.

All four of those girls (Brazzles, as we called them among ourselves) were daughters of professional men—a doctor, a dentist, a tailor, and an undertaker. This meant more to them than it did to us; to hear them talk, you would have thought they were the duchesses and countesses and princesses of Eatonville.

They carried themselves like every day was Easter. Nearly all the other girls would have liked to be them, and the older boys were always buzzing around them. And the more it happened, the more the Brazzles were the focus of every eye, the more they believed that they *should* be the focus of every eye.

"You are too lying," Stella snapped. "You the lyingest girl in town! You so lying, even when you tell the truth, it comes out a lie!"

"He turned into a half gator," Zora insisted. "And I saw it—I was there!"

Recess had just started, and our whole class was gathered in a tight half circle before Zora. Stella hated sharing the spotlight with anyone, but especially with Zora.

Stella Brazzle crossed her arms and smirked. "Where was this, Zora? Top of a magic bean-stalk?"

Everyone laughed except for Teddy and me. We exchanged a look and then looked protectively at Zora. She didn't notice us. Her eyes were focused on her audience.

"I'm gone tell y'all just how it happened from the very beginning," Zora said.

"Don't nobody wanna hear your ol' lies," Stella Brazzle barked. "Ain't that right, y'all?" Not a soul